The relationship between syntax and semantics in the case of *Ma`ani Nahwi* in Arabic and the idea Of *Modistae* in Latin[*]

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Abstract: The research emphasizes on the relation of the Arabic concept of "ma`ani nahwi" and the Latin "modistae". In order to establish this relation, the researcher illustrates the role of Aristotle's categories in influencing the concept of the Medieval Latin "modistae". This is followed by a reevaluation of the influence of Arabic philosophers, such as al-Farabi (c.870-c.950 CE), Avicenna (980-1037 CE) and Averoes (c.1126-c.1198 CE) on Latin philosophy and linguistics, especially Jurjani's (d.1078 CE) role in introducing his concept of "nazm" towards "ma`ani nahwi". The research contributes to the understanding of the relationship between syntax and semantics which has not been effectively clarified within the framework of traditional Arabic grammatical theory.

Key words: connection; *Ma`ani Nahw*; Arabic grammatical concept; the style of Modistae thinking; Jurjani and Averroes

1. Expression of meaning in *Ma`ani Nahwi*

According to Jurjani, the relationship between syntax and semantics has not been effectively clarified within the framework of traditional Arabic grammatical theory. In his commentary (Jurjani, 1960, pp. 66-67) he differentiated between "meaning" and "form" in a sentence. This concept is presented not to linguists but theologians (Mu`tazilah) in impressing on them the need to study not only theology, but also grammar and literary theory in order to improve their understanding of the inimitability of the Qur'an. In this case, the concept of "nazm" combines three aspects which are: (1) lafz hāmil; (2) makna bihi qāim; and (3) rabat lahuma nāzim. This contribution showed the intellectual capacity of Jurjani, particularly when he argued that one could not have the right meaning if not constructed with "lafz" and "rabat" in order to produce a "nazm". In other words, for those who have reached the level of eloquence (fasāhah) will not produce a coherent sentence unless they combine the group of words according to their concurrence followed by the meaning. Starting from here, we know that he focused more on the system of "nazm" and movement among the words after their combination. This means that eloquence does not depend on single words and producing coherent meaning. His major contribution to the discussion of unimitability (i*'jāz*) of the "Qur'an" was on "ma*ānī*" (meanings) and "lafz" (expression). Both concepts have been subject to debate between logicians and grammarians. According to the logicians, meanings were logical ideas signified by expressions, while the grammarians concentrated on the functions of the words.

According to him, "ma'na" was what determined the quality of style and it would be absurd to attribute qualities of eloquence to a single expression as such:

واعلم أنّك كلما نظرت وجدت سبب الفساد واحدا وهو ظنهم الذي ظنوه في اللفظ وجعلهم الأوصاف التي تجري عليه كلها أوصافا في نفسه ومن
حيث هو لفظ وتركهم أن يميّزوا بين ما كان وصفا له في نفسه وبين ما كانوا قد أكسبوه إياه من أجل أمر عرض في معناه (al-Jurjani, 1960, p.
256).

> Know that whenever you look into this (corruption of taste and language) you find that it has only one cause, namely their view about the expression and the fact that they assign to the expression attributes…. without properly distinguishing between those attributes that they assign to them because of something that belongs to its meaning.

Jurjani on the other hand, maintained that there is a large semantic difference between the two sentences: the verb always expresses movement whereas the nominal form of the participle a state:

"وإذا قد عرفت هذا الفرق فالذي يليه من فروق الخبر بين الإثبات إذا كان بالاسم وبينه إذا كان بالفعل وهو فرق لطيف تمس الحجة في علم البلاغة إليه.
وبيانه أن موضوع الاسم على أن يُثبت به المعنى للشيء من غير أن يقتضي تجدده شيئا بعد شيء، وأما الفعل فموضوعه على أنه يقتضي تجدد المعنى المثبت
به شيئا بعد شيء فإذا قلت: زيد منطلق. فقد أثبت الإنطلاق فعلا له من أن تجعله يتجدد ويحدث منه شيئا فشيئا بل يكون المعنى فيه كالمعنى في قولك: زيد طويل
وعمرو قصير. فكما لا يقصد ههنا إلى أن تجعل الطول أو القصر يتجدد ويحدث بين توجيهما وتشبيهتهما
فقط وتقضى بوجودهما على الإطلاق. كذلك لا تتعرض في قولك: زيد منطلق لا كثر من إثباته لزيد"

(Jurjani, 1960, pp. 121-122).

> The next division (in the nuances of the predicate) is that between an assertion in the form of a noun and that in the form of a verb. This is a subtle distinction, which is indispensable in the science of rhetoric. The explanation is that the semantic role of the noun is to assert a meaning about something without implying its constant renewal, whereas it is the verb's semantic role to imply the constant renewal of the meaning that is asserted of something. When you say "Zaydun muntaliqun" (Zayd is leaving), you assert his actual departure without making this departing something he constantly renews and produces. Its meaning is just like in the expression "Zaydun tawilun" (Zayd is tall) and "'Amrun qasīrun" ('Amr is short). You do not make length and shortness of stature something that is renewed and produced, but just assert these properties and imply their existence in general. In the same way, you do not intend in the expression "Zaydun muntaliqun" (Zayd is leaving) anything more than that this is asserted of Zayd.

The idea of semantic as forwarded by Jurjani was taken up by al-Sakkaki (d.1229 CE) the author of *Miftah al-'ulūm* (*Key of the Sciences*), in which he introduced the term "'ilm al-adab" as the name for a new science which embraced all sciences that in one way or another dealt with language. He divided it into three aspects, namely "'ilm al-sarf", "'ilm al-nahw" and "'ilm al-bayān". His innovation was included in the third section about meanings and clarity. He explained the importance of these as follows:

"اعلم أن علم المعاني هو تتبع خواص تراكيب الكلام في الإفادة، وما يتصل بها من الاستحسان وغيره، ليحترز بالوقوف عليها عن الخطأ في تطبيق
الكلام على ما يقتضي الحال ذكره"

(al-Sakkaki, 1983, p. 161).

> Know that the science of meanings follows the properties of the constructions of the language in conveying information, and the connected problem of approving and disapproving these, in order to avoid mistakes in the application of speech to what the situation dictates by paying close attention to this.

In his view "'ilm al-bayān" is "the knowledge of the expression of one meaning in different ways, by referring to it more or less clearly, which serves to avoid mistakes in the application of speech to the full expression of what one wishes to say" (Kees Versteegh, 1997, p. 124). This implies that the science of "bayān" cannot be separated from the science of meaning. In other words, the discussion of semantic elements needs to be put in proper relation with the technical aspects of grammar. Jurjani expressed his dissatisfaction with the direction linguistic study was taking. His *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* contains remarks which could be interpreted as his way

of criticizing how word order and meaning were related. We have to note that Ibn Mada' also complained about "useless morphological exercises" and "theoretical discussions that had nothing to do with the living language" (Ibn Mada', 1988, p. 78).

It is not writers' intention to portray the system of declension (i'rāb) developed by the Arab grammarians as lacking the necessary elements to develop Arabic linguistics. It nevertheless has to be supported by other elements, such as meaning in a semantic concept. In other words, a collaboration between the concept formulated by the logicians and that of the grammarians is called for.

We can conclude that the special meaning of "nazm" exists when the meaning is quoted after the process of entering *al-siyaq* السياق, such as *mubtada'* existed cause of *khabar*. To exemplify this, المنطلق زيد *al-muntaliqu Zayd* means "the one who leaves is Zayd", زيد المنطلق *Zaydun al-muntaliq*, "Zayd is the one who leaves". We may say that the originality of Jurjani as a rhetorician lies in his linking of meaning as the determining factor in the quality of a text to a linguist dimension by considering it not in isolation but always as it is realized within a coherent text composition or cohesion (نظم *nazm*). This is a key notion of both the *Dalā'il al- I'jāz* and *Asrār al-Balāgah*[2]. In both works, he attempted to define the principle in linguistic terms (Kees Versteegh, 1997, p. 119).

To support the ideas above, some remarks on this system shall be necessary to show that the concept of meaning dominates the concept of إعراب *i'rāb* and عامل `āmil. The first example is [ لو لا أَخَّرتني إلى أجل قريب فأصّدّقَ ][3] عامل *āmil. The first example is*[3] وأكنْ the word وأكنْ *wa´kun* by the thinking of توهّم شرطي tawahhum[4] *sharti* (Sibawayh, *al-Kitab*, 3/117)[5] indicates tamanni تمني and العامل الشرطي al-`āmil of *sharti* is not in speech (*lafz*) but conceptual (ma'nawiمعنوي) which عطف إلى أصدّق *taf* on *fa usaddiqa* فأصدّق[6] where it is accusative and not a silent ending (*sukūn*). This idea was supported by Zamakshari who argued that it resembled "*in akhartani usaddiq wa´akun*" إن أَخَّرتني أصدقْ وأكنْ. تخلف الحركة الإعرابية wa´akun bears the *sukun* case of تخلف الحركة الإعرابية *takhallaf al-harakah al-`irabiya*h (Tamam Hasan, 1985, pp. 204-205).

The second example is the use of the accusative case by the removal of genitive (jar an-nazu' 'ala al-khafid) which means the removal of the genitive as result of the accusative on the governee (ma`mūl). According to Ibn Malik (Ibn, 1998, p.19), the accusative case on the governee by removal of the genitive case in speech (lafz) or meaning (ma'nawi) is based on the meaning and is called *al-tadamu al- `ijābi* (Tamam Hasan, 1985, p. 222) based on the Qur'anic verse[7] (واختار موسى قومَه سبعين رجلاً لميقاتنا). "Īkhtār" is the governor of the governee "qawmahu" in thinking (maf`ūlun bih lafzi) because the real governor of it is "min" which is omitted. However, another opinion on its declension (i'rāb) was voiced by al-Akhfash as-Saghir[8] who stated "To remove the genitive is not a must but it permissible to avoid an ambiguous situation, as in: بريت القلم السكينَ *baraytu al-qalama as-sikkīn*a, the original is بريت القلم بالسكين*baraytu al-qalama bisikkīni. Baraytu* is the governor, *al-qalama* the governee of b بريت*baraytu* and السكينَ*as-sikkina* a governee of the removed original governor الجار or genitive. Sibawayh on the other hand did not agree with this idea. According to him, the cause of the removal of the genitive is that the preceding verb became a governor. This opinion is supported by Abu Hayyan (Abu Hayyan, 2001, p. 297). The word "ikhtār" governs two governees because it is a transitive verb or فعل متعدي (fi'l muta`addī).

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[2] Both were the major works of Jurjani.
[3] al-Munāfiqūn: 10.
[4] *Tawahhum* is a synonym for *idmar* or *taqdir*, which is a central concept of Sibawayhi's analysis.
[5] Proving the meaning of sentence cannot be taken for granted.
[6] The recitation of Jumhur فأصدّقَ as an accusative.
[7] Al-A'rāf: 155.
[8] Ali Ibn Sulayman al-Baghdadi.

The third example is العطف على المحل *al `taf `ala al-mahalli* it is *al-`athar al-ma'nawi* or understanding of meaning according to the implicit item (Karim, Abdullah Ahmad Jaad, 2001, p. 161) such as in the Qur'anic verse:

(وما يعزب عن ربّك من مثقال ذرّة في الأرض ولا في السماء ولا أصغر من ذلك ولا أكبر)[9]

By the accusation of أصغر *asghar* and أكبر *Akbar* in this example, they are "mansūbānī" and not genuinely based on the principle "mamnū` `an al-sarf". Originally, they should be used with a genitive term "jar". An accusative here is called being conjunct by place or situation (mahalla) and not by "i'rāb". "Mā" is a negative type in speech, otherwise in the original text, it is nominative case in thinking (raf` ma'nawī) because it is subject of a verb. The subject of the verb is the doer of the action expressed by the verb and must follow the verb (Ibn Hisham, 1999, p. 268).

The fourth example is "al-ittisal wa-inqita` bi-sabab al-ma'na", the connection or disconnection because of meaning, based on the Qur'anic verse[10] (ما لهم به من علم إلا اتباغ الظن). The disconnection of "al-`amal" based on the seven modes of recitation, namely "ittibā`a" in the accusative case would imply a degree of speculation (zann) in contrast to definitive knowledge (`ilm)[11]. Otherwise, ittibā` in the nominative case as recited by the Banu Tamim suggests knowledge and does not imply speculation as in the reading allowing the accusative case. This is so because the word of "`illa" is a disconnect or between governor and "ittibā`a". In the original text, it is disconnected with "min `ilmin" where it is subject and stands in the nominative case. The nominative is chosen because "`ilm" is considered the subject being put into the genitive case with "min" as a "al-mu'akkidah" for "ittibā`a al-zann".

From the above analysis, it has become clear that "nahw" investigates into the syntactic relation between the words of an utterance. These examples are basically concerned with the function of case endings in the sentence. The kinship between "nahw" and concept of "balagah" is thus self-explanatory. In expressing the realities of meanings (ma`ānī), it is concerned with the ways of making utterances express the desired meaning with utmost exactitude through a number of syntactical devices such as conjunction and disconjunction and also the relation between subject and predicate (Ramzi Balbaki, 2004, p. 9). In other words, the concept of Arabic thinking in grammar is not isolated. Rather, the concept of grammar has been included in the concept of semantics. Thus, without the expression of a desired the meaning, the concept of understanding the meaning could not be produced. Actually, more studies are needed on the relationship between "nahw" and its meaning to further clarify this relation, especially in terminology. At a practical level, much of the confusion and inefficiency in teaching Arabic grammar could be avoided if some of the non-functional topics of "nahw" were substituted by those subjects of "balāgah" which focus on the relation between form and meaning.

2. Meaning as a logical approach in Modistae grammar

The Modistae scholars always took the relationship between syntax and semantics as closely linked. They called grammatical features "modi significandi" because they saw each feature as an aspect of the way meaning is encoded. This stands in contrast to a transformational concept where each sentence has only one sentence. According to Hall, the medieval way of understanding gave rise to "two quasi-parallel types of analysis", namely the logical which was concerned with the meaning of terms within a particular context, and the grammatical

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[9] Yunus: 6.
[10] An-Nisa`: 157.
[11] See the opinion of Zamakhshari and Ibn Athiyah in *al-Bahru al-Muhit,* 2001, 406.

which was concerned with linguistic structure (Alain De Libera, 1980, p. 131). To support this idea, De Libera highlighted that the logical analysis by means of "restriction" fundamentally aims at connecting the grammatical surface structure and the logical deep structure within the way field of logic. The Modistae grammar concept as a dependency framework does not provide phrase structure rules. Each word to word link is called a construction and there are two criteria of headship. The syntactic head, called "primum" or "prius"[12] is the governor or the modified element, and the semantic head, or "terminans", supplies or points the way to the referent.

Let's discuss a minor concept in the construction of the modesties concept in sentences, such as the construction of "homo currant" (a man runs). It is an intransitive construction in which a verb has an immediate dependence on the substantive which represents the first constructable. In the analytic approach, it would be considered as follows: There is at least one individual, a man, and he is running; or more simply "something that was a man (regardless of whether it still is or not) has run", or there is at least one individual, which is a man and that it has been the case that he was running, or more simply, "something that is now a man has run" (Alain De Libera, 1980, pp. 139-140). On the other hand, in "homo currit bene" (the man runs well) the adverb is drawn back to the substantive through the verb. "Homo albus currit bene" (the white man runs well) is an intransitive construction in which adjective and verb are immediately dependent on the substantive, and the adverb is dependent on it through the verb (Giulio Lepschy, 1994, p. 298).

However, in transitive construction such as "Socrates currit" (Socrates runs), the subject term "Socrates" supposits for a man. Otherwise, the intransitive construction (a parte post) is presented as a relation between determinable and determinant, such as "homo est animal" (man is an animal) (1994, p. 298). However, there were several debates among the Modistae scholars on this issue. According to Martin of Dacia, the construction of acts[13] and construction of person[14] does not seem to present problems, such as "Socrates et Plato currunt" (Socrates and Plato run), linguistically two nouns are one suppositum (noun phrase). The conjunction of "si Socrates currit" (if Socrates runs), according to him if he runs he moves (1994, p. 299). However, this idea has been commented by Boethius of Dacia saying that a conjunction is only a connector between the words in the sentence and not a constructable. Being constructable, it must be a mode of signifying grammatical properties reflected to the mind. However, Radhulphus adopts the fundamental distinction between intransitive and transitive construction. This can be divided into four basic constructions: intransitive construction of acts, such as "Socrates currit" (Socrates runs), intransitive construction of persons, such as "homo albus" (white man), transitive construction of acts, such as "lego librum" (I read a book) and transitive construction of persons, such as "cappa Socratis" (Socrates' cloak) (1994, p. 299). Another type of construction, such as "vado in ecclesiam" (I go to church), the preposition here is considered a medium of the construction of the verb with the complement and assigned to the complement which is "ecclessiam" or linguistically the "terminans" or determinator. Otherwise, the two main constructables, such as "homo albus currit" and "homo currit bene", the adjective "albus" and the adverb "bene" are determinants.

In another case, Thomas of Erfurt believed the concept of suppositum (noun phrase) and appositum (verb phrase), such as "Socrates percutit Plato" (Socrates bit Plato), depends on the term of verb either oblique[15] or not which follows it in a verb+oblique construction (1994, p. 300). Therefore, he concentrated on the meaning of the

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[12] In Arabic called *al-`amil al-lafzi* and *al-`amil al-maknawi*.
[13] Verb.
[14] Noun.
[15] Similar in Arabic grammar called *al-fi`il al-muta`ddi*.

word in the sentence. It can be concluded that the semantics of the modistae allows a distinction between formal meaning and material meaning. Where a formal meaning is constant it can be defined by the nature of words. Otherwise, the material meaning cannot be properly determined by the context.

The aim of the grammarians to explore how a word matched things apprehended by the mind and how it signified reality was quite successfully realized. Since a word cannot signify the nature of reality directly, it must stand for the thing signified in one of its modes or properties, such as being, understanding and signifying; it is this discrimination of modes that the study of categories and parts of speech is all about. Thus, the study of sentences should lead one to the nature of reality by way of the modes of signifying (May 2008 http://www.britanica.com/The European middle Ages).

3. The role of Arab logicians in enhancing the concept of Ma`ānī al-Nahwī

Even though some of the Modistae claimed that their idea was derived directly from Aristotle, we cannot deny that the Arab logicians enhanced the concept of meaning in the sentence structure. This statement has been supported by Hall who stated:

> Nevertheless, the attention paid to syntax by the grammarians of the later 12th century laid the basis for the continued close association between logic and grammar, a relationship fruitful enough to create a logical grammar within the domain of grammar and which culminated in the speculative grammars of the modesties. This was a development from the result of the full assimilation of the "new" Aristotle and the works of the Arab logicians. (1971, p. 29).

Butterworth agreed with him stating that:

> Aristotle's writing found a much more receptive audience on the other side of the Mediterranean as learning on his writings flourished in Constantinople, Edessa and Antioch. When the School of Alexandria was forced to close, it moved to Antioch in Syria. In the 6th century, many of Aristotle's writings had been translated into Syriac. This activity continued until some of Syriac translations were rendered into Arabic. In the 10th century, the school moved to Baghdad" (C.E. Butterworth, 1983, p. xi).
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> Specialized linguists translated Greek philosophy and science into Arabic, such as Hunayn Ibn Ishaq, Yahya Ibn Bitriq and Ibn al-Muqaffa (A. Amin, 1978, pp. 298-313). Greek philosophy reached Europe via translations from Arabic16 into Hebrew in Muslim Spain, which was then followed by translations into Latin in the middle of the twelfth century. Aristotelian thought had hitherto been relatively unknown in the West. In the East, they had been studied and commented by al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, followed by Ibn Rushd (Averroes) at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Even after the Latin conquest of Contantinople in 1204 CE and the discovery of Greek manuscripts, the most complete translations of Aristotle's works were still those done from Arabic (Butterworth, 1983, p. xi).

The researcher wants to highlight some of the tremendous contribution of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in further developing Aristotelain thought with his *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, thereby giving a big impact on the development of the Modistae in Europe and, as it seems, the starting point in the progress of understanding Aristotle's categories in the Middle Ages. Butterworth writes:

> Without exaggeration, the beginnings of scholarship in the later middle ages can be traced to the effect this newly found legacy had upon western Europe, especially to the effect it had upon such important thinkers as John of Salisbury, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon (1985, p. xi).

Averroes, in his commentary tried to present that the "uncombined utterances which denote uncombined

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[16] Arabic and Syriac translations were based on Andronikus Greek edition of Aristotle writings.

ideas necessarily denote one of ten things either substance or quantity or quality or relation or where or when or position or to have or doing or being acted upon" (Butterworth, 1983, p. 30). He gave an example of man and horse and how to differentiate between human and animal. As in "Zayd rode a white horse last year", "Zayd" and "horse" are understood by the listener once they have been combined. It also gives a new meaning when it comes with the new word "white", it is a white horse, the word white showed the concept of quality in the sentence and is called adjective. The analysis shows that he concentrated more on meaning where it has a relation with the concept of thinking, i.e. there is relation between words and mind which depends on the logic of utterances when combined. This statement resembles the concept of "nazm" introduced by Jurjani in his *Dalā'il al-I'jāz* who understood that the sentence depended on the connection of meanings in utterances. The same we find highlighted in the second part of Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's Categories (Ch. 14). Admittedly, the statement and supposition do not admit truth and falsehood in as far as the thing to which the supposition refers to outside the mind is itself altered. For example, the supposition that Zayd is sitting is indeed true[17] when Zayd sits and false when he stands (1983, p. 43). What he tried to analyze here is similar to the concept of logic when the action of something needs to be confirmed with the correct word of the action and not vice versa.

   In conclusion, the connection between the "ma'ānī al-nahwī" in Arabic and the idea of "modistae" in Latin is able to prove that the relationship between the concept of thinking in Arabic grammar and semantics, and the concept of modesties existed for no other reason but because a number of them were Ibn Rushd's followers and students (Averroists)[18]. This has been stated in the *Opus Majus*[19]:

>   After Avicenna Came Averroes a man with a solid doctrine, who corrected the sayings of his predecessors and whose contribution is great…. The philosophy of Averroes long neglected, rejected and reproved by the most famous doctors' today wins the unanimous approval of the wise man. The 14th and 15th centuries, the influence of Averroes in Europe grew so strong that his works replaced those of Aristotle in the curriculums of European universities. John Bacon Thorpe of England (d.1340) was so well versed in Averroism that he was called "Prince of the Averroist". In 1473, Lois X1 of France regulated the study of philosophy in his realm, designated the works of Aristotle and Averroes as the only allowable philosophical texts. At the University of Padua, Islamic philosophy in general and Averroes in particular were taught until the 17th century. In the 13th century, the Christian priesthood became worried about the propagation of Averroism, which was presented in Europe as the belief in the identity of intellect among all humanity, the negation of the knowledge of particular qualities in God, destruction of divine providence in the sublunary the world, and the affirmation of two distinct and contradictory orders of knowledge of faith and the knowledge of reason (H. Zainal Abidin Ahmad, 1975, p. 18).

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[17] Literally, "does admit of truth" (*innama yaqbal al-sidq*).

[18] See *Opus Majus* by Roger bacon.

[19] The major traveling.

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